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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the development of language proficiency of 83 foreign students of English as a second language who were living in English-speaking American homes during their 14-week intensive formal language program. Statistical comparison with non-homestay students revealed that homestay students achieved significantly higher course grades and higher scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). However, significant differences in the TOEFL overall and reading comprehension scores seemed to be more a function of native language than either home-residency or sex. Home-residency seemed to be the factor most correlated with grades. The study is deemed to lend support to the assumption that the best way to acquire language competency is to live in an environment where the language of study is used. It is speculated that the success of homestay students may be the result of practicing the second language in a relaxed atmosphere: also, it is possible that the student who chooses a homestay is likely to be outgoing and highly motivated to learn a foreign language. (JB)

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EFFECT OF SOJOURNER HOUSING SITUATIONS ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION*

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An adult's learning to speak, read, and write the language of a foreign culture results from a combination of factors. Intellect and aptitude are the most obvious. Attitude and motivation are more subtle but equally influential. The study reported here focused on 83 English language students whose attitudes and motivations caused them to elect to live with American families for the duration of their 14 weeks of intensive classroom study.

Spolsky writes, "One of the most important factors (in language learning) is the attitude of the learner to the language and its speakers." (Spolsky, 1969, p. 271.) Gardner and Lambert (1972) echo this opinion and Chastain goes on to state that, ". . . affective characteristics (of the learner) have at least as much influence on learning as do ability factors." (Chastain, 1975, p. 153.) Tang found that, "There is a positive correlation between favorable attitude toward the second language and second language reading performance . . ." (Tang, 1974, p. 235).

Schumann goes on to suggest that favorable language learning situations are a function of the social distance between the language learners and the speakers of the target language. That is, social dominance/subordinance, learner social cohesiveness, cultural congruity and positive attitude

between learners and speakers, and learners' plans to remain in target language are factors which influence the language learning situation. He argues that as social distance is decreased second language learning is facilitated (Schumann, 1976, pp. 135-42).

Oller, Hudson, and Liu found that learners with integrative motives for learning a second language performed better than those who were more instrumentally motivated (Oller, Hudson, and Liu, 1977, p. 11).

Language itself is merely one facet of culture and Paulston, herself a bicultural person, reflects that, "Attitudes and perceptions are enormously important in becoming bicultural, because one does not really emulate behavior one disapproves of, at least not at any deeper level" (Paulston, 1978, p. 373).

The context in which the language learner is acquiring the second language also affects rate and degree of acquisition. This author has found that a permissive classroom atmosphere can foster novice language learners to try their fledgling skills, to exercise their abilities and finally to fly on their own. Conversely, when the learner feels threatened and needs to defend himself from the quick judgments of those around him, learning is impeded. Stivick explains that, "Some degree of intimacy is a precondition of receptive learning . . . the reduction of defenses is a matter of fundamental importance and chronological priority" (Stivick, 1976, p. 121).

Oller summarized some of these conceptions concerning the affective component in second language acquisition by writing that, "We will probably continue to believe that . . . a favorable view of the target language culture is apt to promote the learning of the target language. That a person who is eager to learn and willing to take social risks is more likely to succeed in learning a language than a person who is less strongly motivated" (Oller, no date, p. 12).

The study reported here has as its basis the suppositions summarized by Oller as well as the other factors cited by researchers mentioned earlier. It focuses on students enrolled in an intensive English program who elected to take the "social risk" of living with American families during their 14-week course of study. In the family environments use of English was both necessary and encouraged.

Though it would seem obvious, it needs to be mentioned that the language learner who is compelled to use the second language seems to learn that language faster. In a study of different sorts of second language learning programs Fathman found that, ". . . (students) making the most marked improvement were in . . . settings where the use of English was encouraged and necessary for communication" (Fathman, 1976, p. 433).

It is assumed that the homestay situations satisfied some of the conditions alluded to by authors cited previously. In addition to having positive attitudes toward the English-

speaking Americans they chose to live among, the students who elected a homestay were willing to take the "social risk" of actually living with Americans--at slightly greater expense than dormitory accommodations. While all were desirous of having a live-in situation where they could practice their developing English language skills, most were also eager to participate in family activities and to have opportunities of doing as their American "brothers and sisters" did. Their motivation seemed more "integrative" than merely "instrumental."

American families had been admonished to treat the students not as guests, but as members of the family, i.e., social distance was minimized. All families were perceived as willing to afford a permissive, even encouraging atmosphere for the English language learner. Negative judgmental attitudes were to be avoided.

This study examines the rate of English language acquisition of homestay students as compared to their non-homestay counterparts. Beyond the scope of this study, and perhaps an impossible task, is separating the factor of social "risk taking" from the factor of exposure to the target language that is afforded by taking risks.

Hypotheses Tested

The null hypotheses tested were:

H_1 Mean of total TOEFL scores of homestay students = Mean of total TOEFL scores of non-homestay students

H_2 Mean of TOEFL Section 1 scores of homestay students = Mean of TOEFL Section 1 scores of non-homestay students

H_3 Mean of TOEFL Section 2 scores of homestay students = Mean of TOEFL Section 2 scores of non-homestay students

H_4 Mean of TOEFL Section 3 scores of homestay students = Mean of TOEFL Section 3 scores of non-homestay students

H_5 Mean of spoken English class grades of homestay students = Mean of spoken English class grades of non-homestay students

H_6 Mean of grammar class grades of homestay students = Mean of grammar class grades of non-homestay students

H_7 Mean of reading class grades of homestay students = Mean of reading class grades of non-homestay students

H_8 Mean of composition class grades of homestay students = Mean of composition class grades of non-homestay students

Subjects

Subjects were 83 students enrolled for 14-week intensive English language courses who had elected to live with American families for the duration of their study. Other non-homestay students enrolled in the course lived either in dormitories or apartments, usually with or in close proximity to other speakers of their native languages. Native languages included: Spanish, Persian, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Russian, Turkish, Vietnamese, Greek, and French.

Materials and Procedure

At the start of the term all new students in the English program are initially administered the Michigan A test. Additionally, those scoring well on Michigan A take the Michigan Placement test.

During the term students are scheduled to attend 22.5 hours per week of classes in Spoken English, grammar, composition, reading, and laboratory.

At the end of the term all students receive grades in all subjects except laboratory. Many also take the standardized Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Analysis and Results

For the purpose of statistical analysis each of the 83 homestay students was paired with a non-homestay student who had an identical Michigan A or Placement score (±2). It was possible in most pairs to control for both sex and common native language. The pairing process itself controlled for initially demonstrated common language achievement.

Means for homestay and non-homestay students' TOEFL scores and class grades appear in Table 1. In all instances those of homestay students are higher.

TABLE 1

MEANS OF TOEFL SCORES AND CLASS GRADES FOR HOMESTAY AND NON-HOMESTAY ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS TERM A

Location	N	TOEFL Total	Section 1 (Listening)	Section 2 (Structure & Writing)	Section 3 (Reading & Vocabulary)
Homestay	69	440.803	46.742	40.954	44.378
Non-homestay	69	424.112	44.951	39.935	41.064
		Spoken English	Grammar	Reading	Composition
Homestay	83	4.025	3.375	3.712	3.60
Non-homestay	83	3.297	2.738	3.119	2.892

An analysis of variance was done comparing homestay and non-homestay students' scores for total TOEFL and TOEFL subdivisions. Results appear in Table 2.

TABLE 2

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TOEFL SCORES OF HOMESTAY AND NON-HOMESTAY STUDENTS

Total TOEFL	Sum of Squares	F Value	P > F
Pairs - 69	442513.875	3.96	0.0001
Location - Homestay	8905.225	5.50	0.0226*
Total - 127			
TOEFL Section 1 Listening Comprehension			
Pairs - 69	7287.00	6.79	0.0021
Location - Homestay	102.5239	6.59	0.0129*
Total - 127			
TOEFL Section 2 Structure of Writing			
Pairs - 69	4510.3046	3.15	0.0001
Location - Homestay	33.1991	1.60	0.2110
Total - 127			
TOEFL Section 3 Reading Comprehension & Vocabulary			
Pairs - 69	5030.9296	2.64	0.0001
Location - Homestay	351.1574	12.70	0.0007*
Total - 127			

*Significant

Homestay students performed significantly differently with regard to total TOEFL scores, therefore we can reject H_1 that the Mean of TOEFL total scores of homestay students = the mean of total TOEFL scores of non-homestay students. Similarily, H_2, Mean of TOEFL Section 1 scores of homestay students = Mean of TOEFL Section 1 scores of non-homestay students, and H_4, Mean of TOEFL Section 3 scores of homestay students = Mean of TOEFL Section 3 scores of non-homestay students can be rejected.

H_3, Mean of Section 2 of homestay students = Mean of Section 2 of non-homestay students cannot be rejected. That is, there was not a significant difference between both groups' scores on this "Structure and Writing" section.

Table 3 shows results of analysis of variance done on students' class grades. Differences between homestay and non-homestay students was highly significant in reading spoken English, grammar, and composition.

TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE - ENGLISH CLASS GRADES OF HOMESTAY AND NON-HOMESTAY STUDENTS

Spoken English	Sum of Squares	F Value	P > F
Pairs - 83	124.1290	1.87	0.0028
Location - Homestay	21.6795	27.05	0.0001**
Total - 163			
Grammar			
Pairs - 83	85.6097	1.11	0.3199
Location - Homestay	16.6216	17.90	0.0001**
Total - 163			
Reading			
Pairs - 83	97.6280	1.42	0.0599
Location - Homestay	14.4310	17.34	0.0001**
Total - 163			
Composition			
Pairs - 83	93.6687	1.11	0.3264
Location - Homestay	20.4446	20.04	0.0001**
Total - 163			

**Highly Significant

We can therefore reject null hypotheses 5, 6, 7, and 8 which (in summary) state that the means of each type of class score for homestay students = the means of each type of class score for non-homestay students.

In addition to analysis of variance, Duncan's New Multiple Range Test was applied to detect any qualitative differences among students due not only to the homestay/non-homestay variable but also, perhaps, due to sex and nationality. Raw data from all students in the English

language program, not only the paired samples, were used for this operation. (N = 492 for TOEFL, N = 710 for class grades.) Numerical results are expressed in Table 4.

TABLE 4

RESULTS OF DUNCAN'S NEW MULTIPLE RANGE TESTS

TOEFL (N = 492)	F Value	P > F
Total	4.50	0.0001**
T_1 (Listening Comprehension)	1.88	0.0518
T_2 (Structure)	0.93	0.4971
T_3 (Reading Comprehension & Vocabulary)	18.40	0.0001**
CLASSES (N = 710)		
Spoken English	3.81	0.0001**
Grammar	2.14	0.0244*
Reading	9.81	0.0001**
Composition	3.37	0.0005**

* Significant; **Highly Significant

Significant differences for the total TOEFL score and the TOEFL part 3 seemed to be more a function of native language than either location of residence or sex. (Means in descending order were: Spanish, Arabic, Persian.) For all class grades the location of residence seemed to be the

factor most correlated with grades, i.e., homestay students earned higher grades in all classes. Neither sex nor native language seemed related to classroom performance.

Discussion

The study strongly lends support to the assumption held by many language learners and teachers, that the best way to acquire language competence is to live in an environment where it is used.

Results of comparison of means for spoken English and reading grades in part substantiate those found by Hamayan, Genesee and Tucker, i.e., ". . . use of the (native language) was negatively associated with performance on the oral production measure (of L_2) and shyness was similarly negatively associated with reading skills in (L_2)." (Hamayan, Genesee, and Tucker, 1977, p. 225.) We assume that non-homestay students both used native language more and were somewhat shyer as evidenced by their not electing a homestay initially.

In addition to being forced to use the language, we might suppose that the homestay students were also encouraged to exercise and experiment with their L_2 in an atmosphere more relaxed than the usual classroom. We can suppose also that those risk-taking students who elected a homestay were not only less shy than their counterparts but more positively disposed toward the English language speakers surrounding them.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Future studies might gather more data to further substantiate the conclusions expressed here.

Additionally, the behavioral measure of staying with Americans as being evidence for positive attitude toward them and their language needs to be substantiated by other measures. This necessitates developing a valid, easily-administered instrument to be used early in the school term. It would need to be in the students' native languages. A post-test instrument would also be desirable, one geared to catch the subtlity of both positive and negative changes in attitude and motivation that might develop during the 14-week term (see Gardner and Smythe, 1977).

It would also be revealing to compare homestay and non-homestay students' rate/degree of acculturation over time. As with the attitude assessment this too necessitates developing a reliable and valid instrument, a task that is currently in progress (Barna, 1979) with long-term sojourners as the target population.

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